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SUBJECT: TRIBAL ISLAMISTS FORM NEW GROUPING WITHIN
PARLIAMENT'S ISLAMIC BLOC

REF: 06 KUWAIT 3826

Sensitive But Unclassified; not for Internet distribution.

¶1. (U) Six tribal Islamist parliamentarians announced March 11 the formation of a new grouping within the 17-member Islamic Bloc. Abdullah Akkash, the Coordinator of the still unnamed grouping, said it would operate in a manner similar to the Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM) and the Salafi Islamic Grouping (SIG), the two Islamist political associations represented in the Islamic Bloc. (Note: Political parties are not officially permitted by the Kuwaiti government; however, political associations do exist and operate as de facto political parties. End note.) Both Akkash and MP Ahmed Bager, the Coordinator of the Islamic Bloc, stressed that the formation of the new grouping did not indicate a split in the Islamic Bloc. Akkash added that members of the grouping would continue to participate actively in the Islamic Bloc. The members of the new grouping are: Khaled Al-Adwa, Jaber Al-Muhailbi, and Dr. Saad Al-Shraye from the Awazim tribe; and Dr. Daifallah Bou Ramya, Hussein Mezyid Al-Deehani, and Abdullah Akkash from the Mutran tribe.

¶2. (SBU) Disagreements over the grilling of Health Minister Shaykh Ahmed Abdullah Al-Sabah provided the impetus for the formation of the new grouping; however, differences between independent, tribal Islamist MPs and Islamist MPs affiliated with political associations outside Parliament have been growing for some time. Independent Islamists complain that the ICM and SIG make decisions outside the framework of the Islamic Bloc and often pursue their own political agendas at the expense of the bloc as a whole. For example, prior to the grilling of the Health Minister, the ICM was widely rumored to be negotiating backroom deals with the Government without consulting with other members of the Islamic Bloc. By forming this new grouping, independent, tribal Islamists are likely trying to gain more weight within the Islamic Bloc and offset the influence of the ICM and SIG.

¶3. (SBU) Comment: The formation of this new grouping inside the Islamic Bloc is significant for two reasons. First, it demonstrates the emerging importance of parliamentary alliances as the primary means of interacting with other MPs and the Government. These relatively new alliances, or "blocs," represent a shift in Kuwaiti parliamentary politics away from individual personalities towards more broad-based ideological and tribal groupings. This change is largely the result of recent electoral reforms, which are forcing MPs to reach out to a much larger electorate. Second, the formation of this grouping highlights differences between Islamists affiliated with political associations that have a relatively coherent and cohesive political agenda, and independent, tribal Islamists whose ideological and political platforms are less well defined and whose focus is primarily on

obtaining government benefits for their constituents.

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LeBaron